

ROMANCE OF THE FORT OF GWALIOR

BY
HEM CHANDRA RAI M. A.

*Ex Senior State Secretary, Sirmoor State,
Author of "Flowers of Hindu Chivalry."*



Foreword by

H. L. O. GARRETT M. A. (OXON) I. E. S.

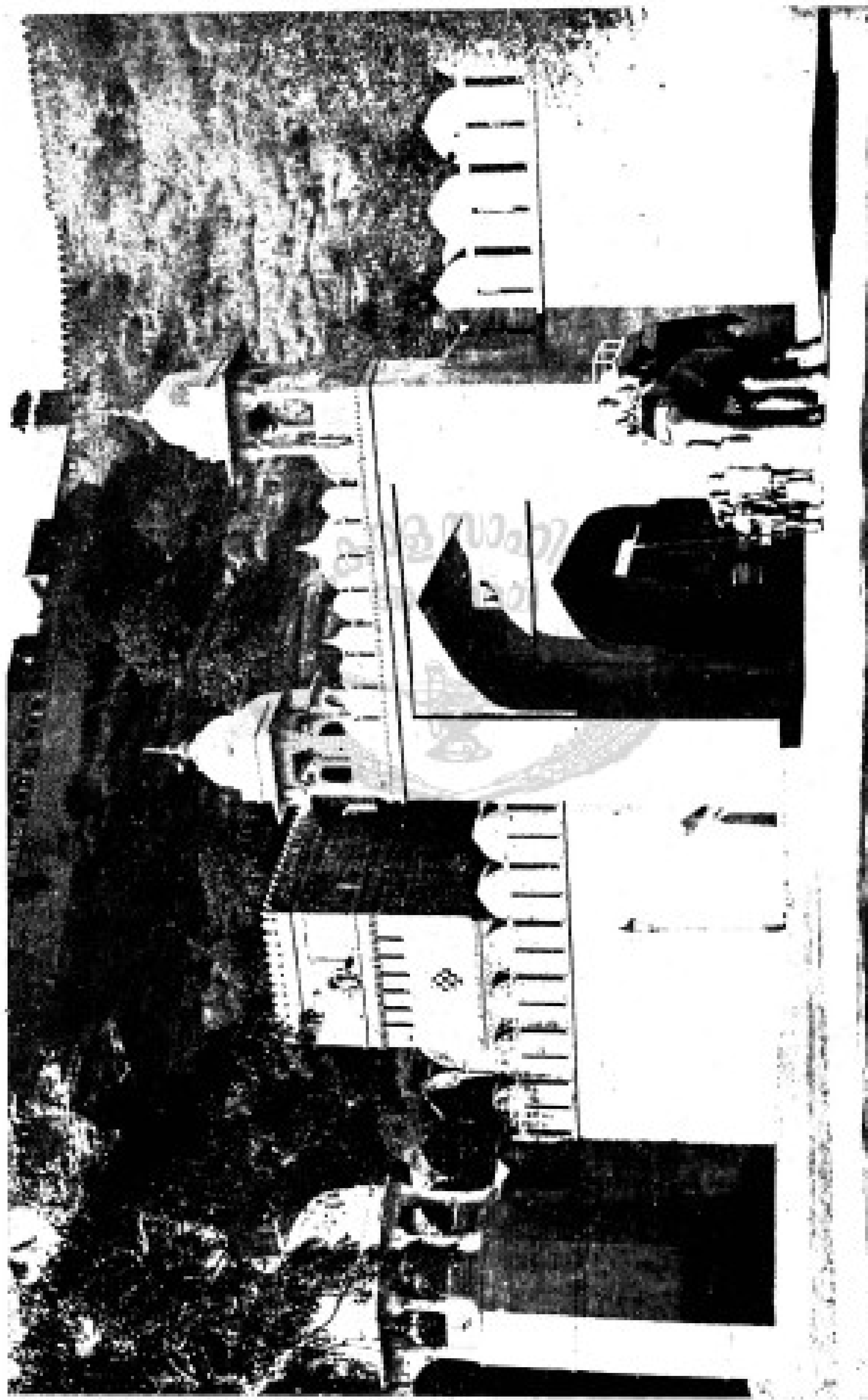
1931

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**RAMA VARMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
TRICHUR, COCHIN STATE.**







The Gateway, Gwalior.

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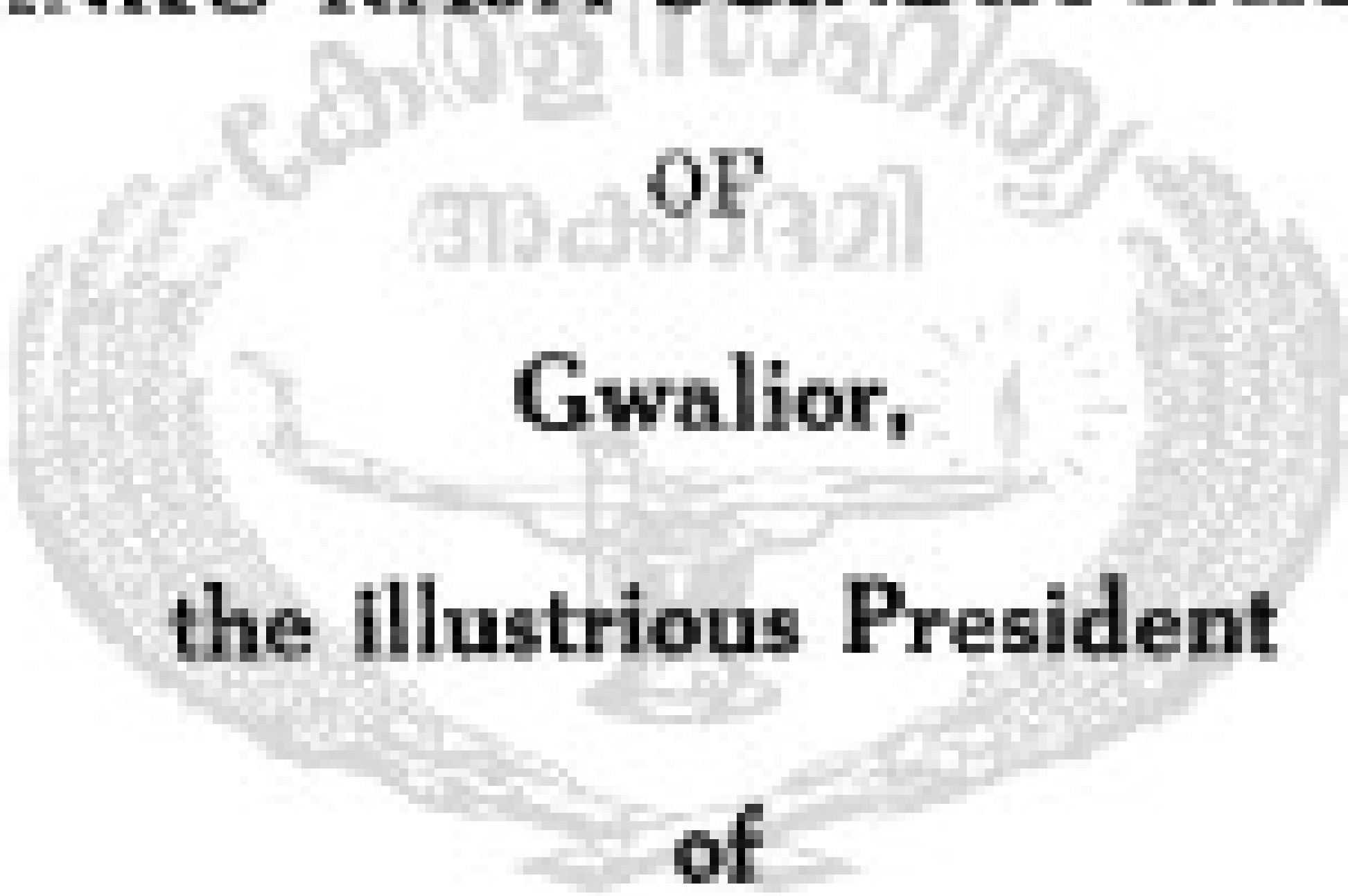
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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
WITH PERMISSION
TO
HER HIGHNESS MAHARANI
SHRI CHINKU RAJA SCINDIA SAHEBA, C. I.

OF
Gwalior,
the illustrious President
of
the Council of Regency,
a veteran Administrator
and
a celebrated patron of letters.

FOREWORD

I have been asked by my old pupil, Mr. H. C. Rai, to look over the manuscript of his little monograph and to write a brief prefatory note.

There is no more interesting fortress in India than the great rock of Gwalior. It has passed through many vicissitudes. First the Rajput fortress, then the Bastille of the Mogals, its ramparts have more than once rung to the feet of a British sentry. It played its part in the Great Mutiny also and was the scene of the last real stand of the mutineers under the warlike Rani of Jhansi. Today it stands a venerable relic of the past, the precious possession of the historic House of Scindia.

H. L. O. Garrett
M. A. (OXON), I. E. S.,
Principal, Government College,
LAHORE.

January, 1931.

PREFACE

Some years ago I happened to read Lt. Colonel Sleeman's book 'Rambles and Recollections' and therein came across the chapter on the war of succession between Aurangzeb and his brothers. The awful tragedies enacted in the fort of Gwalior concerning the fates of princes of the blood royal, as a sequel of the war, excited my interest so profoundly that I was led to undertake further studies about the history of this ancient fort. It was then that the idea of writing a brief narrative crystallised in my brain under the belief that the events which had so keenly aroused my interest would not fail to interest other people. This small book has therefore been written more in the spirit of a Romance, which I have tried to enliven with the human touch wherever possible, than as a Chronicle of dry-as-dust dates.

I claim no originality in this work. Practically all the historical data has been culled from numerous sources; I have just strung it

together in chronological order so as to form a succinct whole.

The sudden thrill of romance which led to the erection of the fort in the 3rd century A. D. has reverberated through the succeeding centuries with unflagging vigour and variety. Since the establishment of Pax Britannica the perpetual armed conflict between the heterogeneous warring races of this country has become a thing of the past. With the dawn of peace under a strong and stable government, Gwalior-custodian of the grand military traditions of Scindia- has changed its aspect accordingly. Diverted from the pursuit of war and territorial expansion, the versatile genius of the exalted House of Scindia has vigorously asserted itself in the direction of the arts of peace. Gwalior is rapidly developing into a magnificent industrial centre in the Central India regions under the fostering industrial policy of His Highness the Maharaja Scindia's Government. It is now a sunny city of clean metalled roads, open squares and sanitary buildings and thoroughly equipped with all the numerous amenities of modern civilization, so that the enlightened policy of the Dynasty is abundantly in evidence at every step. The

cosmopolitan character of Scindia's armies in pre-British times is still fully reflected in the diverse ethnic composition of the population of modern Gwalior. A silent, though comprehensive, tribute to the freedom from petty racial prejudices which has always distinguished the Scindia Dynasty !

I am greatly indebted to my old Professor Lt. Colonel H. L. O. Garrett, who has kindly gone through the manuscript and written a Foreword at my request. My obligations are also due to G. R. Tait Esquire, Asstt. Chief Publicity Officer, Indian State Railways Publicity Deptt., Delhi, who has lent me some nice blocks to illustrate this book.

HEM CHANDRA RAI M. A.

DELHI SHAHDARA,
January, 1931.

PART I

RAJPUTS & AFGHANS

KUTCHWAHA RAJPUTS

Like a colossal sentinel the famous rock fort of Gwalior has for centuries stood guard on the confluence of the highroads which diverge into Central India from the North. It is a stupendous structure stretching to close upon three thousand yards in length with a breadth varying from two hundred to nine hundred yards. The eminent author of "Taj-ul-Maasir" rightly describes it as "the pearl in the necklace of the castles of Hind". To trace the history of this magnificent edifice it is necessary to take a plunge into the gloom of the earliest ages of Mediæval India. It appears that Dev Nag the last of the Nag Bansi Kshattriya kings who ruled over Central India and Bundelkhand in the beginning of the 3rd century A. D., was overpowered by Torman,

the intrepid Kutchwaha general of Gopal Rai, a neighbouring potentate. The irruption of Torman was so sudden and successful that Dev Nag lost everything and his dynasty was extinguished for ever. Gopal Rai was so pleased with Torman as to grant him and his heirs a large fief in perpetuity, round a flourishing village named Sehonia, situated at a distance of 30 miles from the present site of the Fort.

Thakur Sur Singh, one of the lineal descendants of Torman, was afflicted with leprosy. Like all true Rajputs, however, he was a keen lover of the chase. While out on a hunting excursion one day, he paused under a wooded knoll to look out for water. Having lost sight of the quarry he had chased unsuccessfully throughout the livelong summer day, Sur Singh was feeling faint with thirst and fatigue. But there was nothing all round except a dreary wilderness. No human being was in sight, nor any vestige of human habitation. Suddenly he descried a venerable *yogee* who stood at a little distance under an ancient chestnut tree. The Thakur bowed reverently and begged the ascetic for a drink of water. The latter pointed out a spring under a tree close by and han-

ding out a coarse homespun kerchief to the Thakur, desired him to fetch in it some of the crystal liquid flowing from the spring. Having performed his ablutions, Sur Singh brought some water in that wonderful cloth as securely and carefully as if it were designed to contain the very water of life. The ascetic took a little for himself and then bade the stranger to quench his thirst. A deep draught extraordinarily refreshed the Thakur. He gave eloquent expression to his gratitude and begged permission to depart from the presence of the holy man. But the *yogee* looked benevolently into his face and motioned him to stay. Sur Singh felt somewhat puzzled but stood spell-bound in reverent expectation. In kind and tender tones the *yogee* expressed his sympathy for the loathsome disease of the Rajput chief and advised him to bathe in the very same spring on the following Sunday, to get cured. Moved by a profound faith, Sur Singh arrived at the spot with his family and a small band of retainers on the appointed day and dipped himself into the waters of the spring. That very instant he found himself cured and clean. His joy and thankfulness knew no bounds at this miracle. He cast himself at the

feet of the silver haired *yogee* and vowed to give large sums of money and kine in charity to the poor and needy.

The aged ascetic bade Sur Singh do more, that is to widen the bed of the spring, build a masonry tank over it and erect a fort round it, over which would rule a long line of his descendents as kings so long as they continued to take 'Pal' for their patronymic. Sur Singh regretfully told his patron that his slender resources would never suffice to carry out these behests. At this a smile overspread the ancient *yogee's* face and he delivered to the Thakur a small purse containing a few pieces of metal and flints, assuring him that all the necessary expenditure would be provided by the purse. Then placing the palm of his holy hand on the head of Sur Singh and blessing him as a Raja, the *yogee* disappeared in an instant.

This *yogee* was known as *Gwalpa Sidhh*, the saint who communed with the god Krishna. Sur Singh lost no time in carrying out the mandates of his patron saint. He quickly reduced the Rajas and Zemindars of the neighbourhood to subjection and had the

satisfaction of seeing the fort brought to completion during his own life-time. The ancient spring of water is now the *pucca* built Suraj-Kund inside the fort of Gwalior. It was thus founded according to popular tradition and folklore about the year 274 A. D.

AFGHANS

For 36 years Raja Sur Pal reigned over the country wisely and well. He died a natural death bequeathing his territories to his son Rasak Pal. He was murdered after having ruled for one year and was succeeded by his son Narhar Pal. During a vigorous rule of 11 years the latter considerably extended his territory by fresh conquest and built a fine temple to the god Mahadev, which is still in existence. He was killed by a wild boar while hunting in the thick jungles of his realm. From Sur Pal, the founder of the dynasty, onwards a long line of his descendants ruled over Gwalior for a period of eight centuries. Of these Bajra Daman was a well known and powerful ruler. It appears from an inscription dated 977 A. D. at Gwalior that Raja Bijaypal Parihar of kannouj

suddenly assailed and captured the fort but was soon after dislodged and beaten back into his own territories by Bajra Daman. Whatever information can be gleaned about the Pal dynasty from various authentic sources is fragmentary and disconnected. Apparently the course of Hindu history in the Central India regions during these several centuries was either too placid and uneventful to be recorded or it was not preserved owing to lack of interest and carelessness.

Anyway the commencement of Mahomedan invasions introduced a livelier tone in Indian politics. The fame of the riches of India had travelled far and wide in distant lands. Brimming with the fierce zeal of their new faith, the generals of Islam therefore longed to conquer the coveted land of India. Sind and Baluchistan were the first to be subjugated by the Arab invaders who arrived by sea. In 713 A.D. Mahomed Bin Kasim penetrated into the interior and attacked Chittor. He was however not only repulsed but the Arabs were driven out of Sind and Gujerat by the victorious arms of Bapa Rawal. Bapa was the first of the Gehlote heroes of Mewar. Soon after he conquered

Ghazni and Khorasan, as well as all the neighbouring countries. During the reign of his grandson Khoman, Chittor was again invaded by Mahmud the governor of Khorasan, who was, however, taken prisoner and the Afghan armies were beaten back into their own country.

For two centuries the Mahomedans thus endeavoured from time to time to penetrate into India either from the North West or through the deserts of Sind and Rajputana. These attempts were foiled as Hindu power had not yet sufficiently decayed although the process of dissolution was going on apace. The Hindus had long since passed the zenith of their glory. Their ruling and military classes were either sunk in luxury, the inevitable consequences of peace and opulence, or they were too much engrossed in disastrous clannish feuds. Again they were far too much under the sway of a selfish and demoralised priestcraft, who propagated all sorts of superstitions and prejudices for the sake of preserving their superiority in the social scale of the Hindu people. Apart from this, the Rajputs laboured under their punctilious notions of chivalry,

generosity and mercy in war combined with ill-timed superstitions, and as such were no match for the wily Afghans with their sterner, swifter and more relentless methods. To crown all these disadvantages the country was split up into numerous petty kingdoms, principalities and states, each jealous of the power and prosperity of its neighbour. By the close of the 10th. century A. D. the political degeneracy of the Hindus was in a fairly advanced stage. The successful campaigns of Mahmud of Ghazni exposed the decay of Hindu organization in the North. The attitude of the various Hindu States at this time speaks volumes about the national character. While one state was attacked by the Afghans, the others looked on with amused satisfaction or indifference at its downfall. The sack and plunder of towns in the Punjab failed to rouse the slumbers of Delhi, Muttra, Kannouj and Ajmer, not to speak of towns farther South. This criminal folly and neglect, aided by plenty of traitors in the Hindu ranks, paved a sure way for the Mahomedan conquest.

The riches of Kannouj were too strong a bait to be resisted by the Afghans. Mahmud

launched a determined attack on the Parihar Raja Rajyapal of Kannouj in 1019 A.D. The Raja who had never prepared himself against this eventuality at once tendered his submission. This craven conduct, however, exasperated Raja Nanda Pal, the spirited chief of Gwalior and Kalanjar. Accordingly he assailed and slew Rajyapal during the same year. The tables were soon turned on Nanda Pal himself by Mahmud who attacked Gwalior in 1023 A. D. The Raja shut himself up in the fort in the hope that Mahmud would not stop to lay siege to it. This expectation was not fulfilled as Mahmud began a vigorous siege and ordered his troops to take the fort at any cost. Nanda Pal put up a good fight but when he realised that it was hopeless, he negotiated and the siege was raised on his delivering valuable presents, of jewels, horses and elephants to Mahmud. The last of the Kutchwaha dynasty to rule over Gwalior was the son of Budhh Pal, who rejoiced in the name of Tejkarān. The time had now arrived for the literal fulfilment of the prophesy of the saint *Gwalpa Sidhh*. Tejkarān better known as Dulha Rai, married a daughter of the Birgoojar chief of Daosa, who, having no heir

of his own, offered his kingdom to his handsome son-in-law, on condition that the latter came over to adopt Daosa as his capital. In 1128 A. D. Dulha Rai accepted this offer and established the Kutchwaha dynasty in Eastern Rajputana. His son Kankul Rao conquered Dhoondar and his grandson Maidal Rao wrested Amber from the Meenas in 1150 A. D., to which the Kutchwaha capital was then transferred, until the same was brought over to the famous city of Jaipur, in comparatively modern times. Prior to his final departure from Gwalior, Raja Dulha Rai appointed one Thakur Ram Deva Parihar to govern the country as his lieutenant. After two years of successful administration, the Thakur shook off the Kutchwaha yoke and set up as an independent ruler of Gwalior. But the Parihars were not destined to rule for long.

After the overthrow of the Chohan kingdom of Delhi in 1193 A. D., Mahomed Ghorî returned to the attack next year and subdued Kannouj. Gwalior, being out of the direct line of attack of the invaders, was for the time being immune from attack. Kutbuddin Aibak, the able lieutenant of the

Ghori king, however, soon perceived the strategic importance of the fort of Gwalior. If left to lie in Rajput hands its very proximity to Delhi would spell a standing menace to the newly born Mahomedan empire in India, and once that the Afghans captured it they could without much difficulty overawe the turbulent but disunited Rajput barons of the neighbourhood. The Mahomedan power was moreover gathering momentum every day by the arrival of fresh hordes of warlike adventurers from over the North Western frontiers, all imbued with the fiery zeal of Islam. There was nothing more natural for the Mahomedan generals at this time than to utilise this overflowing reserve of virile manpower to the best advantage. Armies were accordingly drafted in all directions to invade the country and enrich themselves by the spoils of war. In 1195 A. D. Aibak deputed one of his principal officers, Bakht Yar, to invest the fort of Gwalior. The Parihar Raja Solankhpal put up a noble fight and refused to yield. Since the siege was prolonged, Bakht Yar passed on to invade Bengal, but the Afghan army remained and turned the siege into a blockade. The Rajputs defended their ancient fort

with grim determination until the last straits were reached for want of provisions. The Raja was eventually starved into submission and Altamash, the handsome slave newly purchased by Aibak, was appointed governor of the fort of Gwalior early in 1197.

Henceforth the fort became a regular bone of contention between Rajput and Afghan; the fortune of war shifted like a pendulum between the two. The Rajputs of Malwa kept a watchful eye on the fort and their opportunity arrived early in 1210 during the weak rule of Aram Shah, the adopted son of Kutbuddin Aibak. They pounced on the fort and put the entire Afghan garrison to the sword. The Parihar chief who got possession of his patrimony by this coup, however, soon degenerated into a votary of opium and sexual pleasures. He took no pains to guard himself against the danger of Afghan attack and his position grew daily weaker.

Aram had been deposed at Delhi and succeeded by a stronger king in Altamash, the slave and son-in-law of Aibak. On his way back to Delhi from the South in 1235, after the conquest of Mandoo and Ujjain,

Altamash happened to encamp with 9300 Afghan cavalry at the village of Antree, situated at a distance of 12 miles from Gwalior. Some of his scouts reported the weakness and neglect of the Rajputs who held the fort of Gwalior. The sultan decided to seize the fort before he proceeded further, and it was forthwith besieged. The warlike sultan rode a magnificent Turkoman horse and arrived at the place which is now known as the "well of Jhilmil". With the keen eyes of an experienced general he discovered an undefended point in the fortifications. During the pitch dark night which followed, he managed to throw large numbers of the Afghans into the citadel. It is strange that the Rajputs should have been caught unawares but so it turned out to be. They fought with desperate courage but as the Afghans were steadily gaining ground and no hope remained, it was resolved to commit the awful rite of *Jauhar*. Huge piles of wood were hastily collected in a tank, which is still called the Jauhar Tank, and ignited with combustibles. With the name of 'Hari' on their reverent lips, the Rajput women, preferring death to dishonour, then jumped on the

flaming piles and were soon reduced to ashes. Their heroic souls had winged their way up to *Amarlok* to await their lords' arrival there ! The battle was over by midday. The Parihar chief Sarang Deva, who had been surprised in his bed, was ruthlessly beheaded. Finding the water supply in the fort to be inadequate, the Sultan ordered ample lands to be enclosed within a wall. Numerous wells and tanks were excavated in this enclosure, whose water is as cool as ice to this day.

Altamash left for the capital after appointing Meeran Yaqub a nobleman of his court as governor of the fort. On the death of the sultan, ten months later, he was succeeded by his slave Balban. The Syed governor who had been left at Gwalior continued to hold it during Balban's rule as an appanage of Delhi.

UNDER TANWAR RAJPUTS

Ere long the empire of Delhi passed into the hands of the Khilji kings. Under the Mahomedan emperors of Delhi it was the custom that the troops of the various nobles mounted guard by turns outside the royal palace on successive nights.

During the reign of Alauddin there was a nobleman named Sikandar Khan among whose troopers were two Rajput brothers of the Tanwar clan, named Parmal Dev and Adhar Dev of village Esmamola in Dandrolee Parganah. One night it was the turn of the Khan's troops to mount guard. It was a pitch dark night in the depth of winter. Rain was falling in torrents, accompanied by a fierce freezing gale. The Sultan happened to come out on the balcony of the palace at the dead of night. He was surprised to behold only two tall silhouetted forms doing guard duty in the drenching rain outside. They stood at their posts with drawn swords heedless of the raging elements and unaware of the keen pair of royal eyes which were admiringly fixed on them from above. Inclement weather had driven the rest of the guard to forsake their posts and skulk under cover. The Sultan was unable to distinguish the features of the two faithful guards under the balcony and without uttering a word soon retired. A searching enquiry was however made in the morning and it was ascertained beyond doubt that the stalwart Tanwar brothers were the only two

soldiers who had properly discharged their duty on that fearful night. Alauddin was exceedingly pleased with them. He summoned the two gallant soldiers in Darbar and asked them to name their reward. The Rajputs gave expression to their deep gratitude for this royal appreciation of their conduct but begged to be excused from asking for a reward. Alauddin was determined to reward them and insisted that they must ask for one. Parmal Dev, the elder of the two brothers, thereupon begged the emperor to give them Gwalior. The royal promise was readily made good and the necessary *Firman* was handed over to the Tanwar brothers.

With joyous hearts Parmal Dev and Adhar Dev hastened to Gwalior and showed the royal *Firman* to the Syeds who were in hereditary charge of the fort of Gwalior. These pious custodians laughed the Rajputs to scorn. They were amused at the simplicity and audacity of the two soldiers who had come all the way from Delhi to ask them to walk out of the fort. Why should the emperor deprive them of their charge when they had committed no fault? The emperor could not be serious

they thought, since they had never been guilty of any offence whatsoever. The Rajputs were almost confounded by the headstrong attitude of the Syeds. All their protestations and assurances were of no avail. The Syeds would not believe them and on the contrary made fun of them. At last the Rajput brothers gave up the discussion with an apparently good grace and joined in the fun. The affair was treated as an excellent hoax and was soon forgotten by the Syeds. Not so by the Rajputs, who laboured under a bitter sense of wrong. The two brothers had, as a matter of fact, determined to achieve by strategem what they knew could not be accomplished by open force. They enlisted themselves in the garrison of Gwalior and with assiduous care ingratiated themselves into the favour of the Syeds. By twos and threes a fairly large band of Tanwar clansmen arrived at odd intervals and were entertained as soldiers in the fort. Selecting a suitable opportunity, Parmal Dev invited the governor and the principal Afghan officers to a feast one night and poisoned the entire lot. This gruesome tragedy was enacted very quietly in Parmal Dev's own quarters. On a prearranged

signal the Tanwar Rajputs then fell on the Afghan garrison and made short work of them. Not one escaped to tell the awful tale of Rajput vengeance.

The fort of Gwalior thus passed into the hands of the Tanwar clan of Rajputs, who ruled over it without a break for a period of about 205 years.

At the close of the 14th century a steady Hindu revival was taking place in the heart of Hindustan. The sway of the Syed kings of Delhi did not exceed far beyond the limits of Delhi. In Bundelkhand and Central India, Dholpur, Gwalior and Chanderi the Rajputs were bidding open defiance to the imperial arms and holding their own successfully. The vigorous Tanwar chiefs never lost any opportunity of consolidating their sway over Gwalior and the neighbouring country. They carried on a protracted desultory war against the Pathan kings of Mandu. Raja Dungar Singh who ascended the *gaddee* of Gwalior in 1424 was a warlike and ambitious ruler. Two years after his accession, he despatched a picked Rajput force to assail the territories of Hoshang, which ravaged the country and returned to Gwalior laden with enormous

booty. To avenge this disgrace, Hoshang invested the fort of Gwalior next year but failed to capture it; the Rajputs beat back the invaders into Mandoo. Sultan Mahmood Khilji of Mandoo invaded Gwalior ten years after but fared no better than his predecessor had done. Dungar Singh led an attack on Narwar and captured the town which was then annexed to his dominions. He was a great patron of the Jain faith and held the Jains in high esteem. During his eventful reign the work of carving Jain images on the rock of the fort of Gwalior was taken in hand; it was brought to completion during the reign of his successor Raja Karan Singh. All around the base of the fort the magnificent statues of the Jain pontiffs of antiquity gaze from their tall niches like mighty guardians of the great fort and its surrounding landscape. Babar was so much annoyed by these rock sculptures as to issue orders for their destruction in 1557. These commands were partially carried out resulting in the mutilation of a large number of these images at the hands of the Mogal vandals.

Karan Singh was as vigorous a ruler as his father Raja Dungar Singh. He extended the

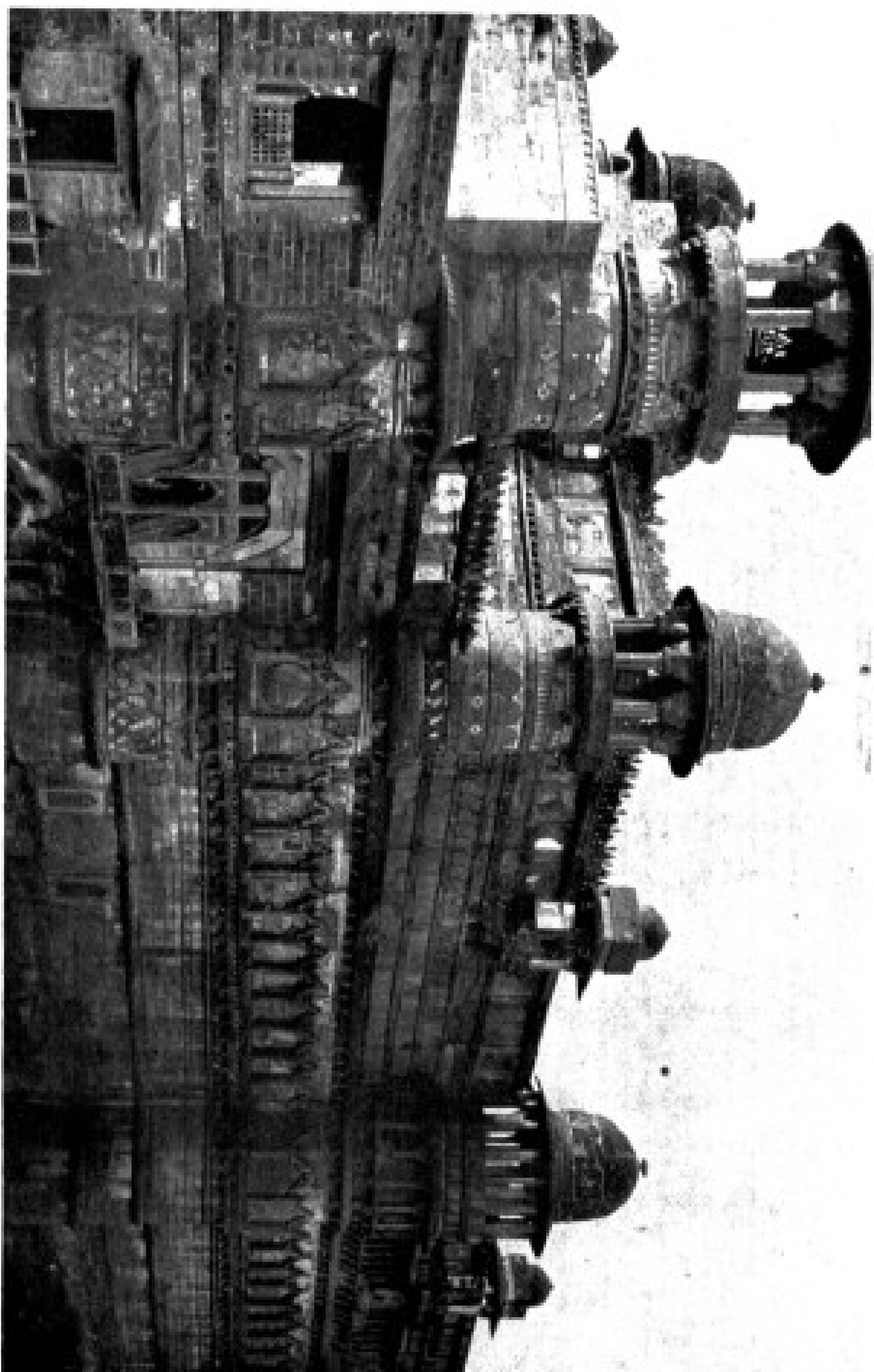
boundaries of his kingdom by fresh conquest and maintained cordial relations with the king of Delhi. In 1465 he was attacked by Hussain, the Sharqi king of Jaunpur, but a treaty of mutual friendship was soon concluded between them. When Behlol Lodhi, the energetic Afghan king of Delhi, took the offensive against Hussain in 1478, Karan Singh rendered valuable assistance to the latter. The arms of Behlol, however, triumphed and he annexed the Jaunpur kingdom. He was deeply incensed against Karan Singh for having aided Hussain. After the conquest of Jaunpur, Behlol attacked the chief of Dholpur who purchased his safety by offering a cash *nazar*. Behlol now bore down on Gwalior with an army of two lakhs, well-mounted and well-armed. Karan Singh could not muster a force of even one half the number of the invaders and was therefore obliged to follow the example of Dholpur to escape molestation. However he shook off the yoke as soon as Behlol was known to be busy elsewhere. In 1479, Karan Singh passed away and was succeeded by Kalyan Singh who ruled for a period of 7 years.

Raja Man Singh ascended the *gaddee* in

1486 and was undoubtedly the most famous ruler among the Tanwar dynasty of Gwalior. On the death of Behlol Lodhi his son Sikandar ascended the throne of Delhi. Man Singh tried to conciliate him with rich presents which were sent to Delhi in 1499 with Nehal Singh the Tanwar ambassador; but the king was too much incensed to be pacified in this way. Sikandar Lodhi marched on Gwalior in 1501. Man Singh made fresh overtures for peace which was eventually concluded on his delivering Said, Baboo and other political refugees of note to the Delhi king. Hostilities again broke out next year and Sikandar invested the fort of Gwalior. But the Rajputs put up a determined resistance and forced the Afghans to raise the siege. Not content with this success the Rajputs laid an ambush for the king while he was riding past the town of Jawer in Gwalior territory. As the Rajputs rushed him, the royal escort bravely struck in and perished in large numbers but their heroic stand enabled Sikandar to make good his escape. This enraged him not only for his discomfiture in the siege but more so for having been subjected to such mortal danger and indignity in the Rajput ambush. Sikandar

therefore determined to conquer Gwalior at the earliest possible date. The attempt could not however be made till 1515, in which year an imposing military levy was held at Agra with a view to launching an irresistible offensive against the fort. Unfortunately Sikandar died soon after and his cherished design was left unfulfilled.

Man Singh was undoubtedly the most famous ruler among the Tanwar dynasty of Gwalior. He was an able administrator and a celebrated patron of the arts of peace. A number of handsome buildings were erected by him, of which Man Mandir inside the fort is the best type. Each stone was worked upon for 26 days before it formed part of this magnificent palace. Fergusson says that this palace is "the most remarkable and interesting example of a Hindu palace of an early age in India". The people were happy and uniformly prosperous during the Raja's long rule from 1486 to 1517. His generous patronage of music attracted the finest musicians of India to the court of Gwalior. Ever since Gwalior has maintained its proud distinction of being the home of some of the greatest exponents of this fine art. Tan Sen,



Man Mandir in the Fort.

the celebrated Orpheus of India, developed his musical genius in Raja Man Singh's academy before he went forth to shine as one of the nine gems of Akbar's court.

One day while passing through the village of Rai, situated towards the North East of the fort, Man Singh paused to witness a fight which was in progress between two fierce buffaloes. Some of the onlookers had already been gored by the beasts in their wild rushes. Presently a young Gujar maiden, bearing a pitcher of water on her head, appeared on the scene. To coolly put aside the pitcher, catch one of the buffaloes by the horns and force it to its haunches by sheer bodily strength was for her the work of a moment. The Raja was amazed at the extraordinary daring and physical strength of that girl, and her surpassing loveliness touched the tenderest chord in his heart. So, like king Cophetua, Man Singh swore that the heroic damsel should be his queen. There was no obstacle to their union. He named her Mriga Nayana (i. e. the gazelle eyed lady) and made her his favourite queen. Her every wish was gratified. Near the entrance of the fort the Raja built a palace for her, which is still

known as the Gujari Mahal. Her memory is also perpetuated by the Rani Sagar Lake inside the fort, which was fed by an aqueduct connecting it with a spring of fresh water near the village of Rai, the home of the Rani, in compliance with her express wishes.

IN AFGHAN HANDS

Bikramajit, the last of the Tanwar rulers of Gwalior, succeeded Raja Man Singh in 1519 and ruled for three years only. He refused to pay the annual subsidy to the imperial officers who were sent from Delhi to collect it. Accordingly Ibrahim Lodhi, who had ascended the throne of Delhi, despatched a powerful army under Azam Humayoon, a nobleman of his court, to subdue the recalcitrant Raja of Gwalior. The Rajputs were not disposed to yield this time. They fought with gallantry and determination. But it was an unequal struggle. Whereas the loss of every warrior in the Rajput ranks was irreparable, the Afghan host was being frequently reinforced. There was a terrific conflict over the Badalgarh bastion until the Rajputs were overwhelmed by the sheer weight of Afghan numbers. The fall of this redoubtable outwork enabled

Azam Humayun to capture gate, after gate though after enormous sacrifices. Thousands perished in the general assault, which testifies to the murderous nature of the fighting. The Rajputs made their last great stand at the Lakshman Pol. Taj Nizam, one of the principal nobles of Ibrahim's court, fell fighting at this gate, near which his remains were interred in a modest tomb. The Raja was at last unable to continue the battle for want of numbers. He then sued for peace and presented himself before Azam. Bikramajit's gallant conduct had won him the admiration of Ibrahim Lodhi, who was pleased to invest his subdued foe with a costly robe of honour and assigned the Pargana of Shamsabad for his maintenance. The Hindu rule of Gwalior thus came to an end in 1519 for the time being. There is no doubt that the two famous gates in the fort called Badalgarh Pol and Hathi Pol, were built by the Tanwar Rajputs during the 15th century.

On the death of Bikramajit, the noble traditions of the Tanwar house of Gwalior were inherited by Rao Ram Singh. He was every inch a soldier and yearned for the glory of his ancestors. His proud restless

spirit was galled by the thought of having to live on the bounty of the Sultan. While Ibrahim Lodhi was straining every nerve, early in 1526, to repel Babar's invasion, Rao Ram Singh seized the opportunity to make a bold bid for the lost kingdom of his forefathers. He swiftly moved on Gwalior and defeated Tatar Khan, the Afghan governor of the fort, in the open field. The latter shut himself up in the fort but was very hard pressed by the Tanwar chief. As a last desperate resort, Tatar Khan appealed for succour to Babar who had already established himself at Delhi. Babar accepted this invitation with pleasure, particularly as the chiefs of Gwalior had, during the past decade, acknowledged the supremacy of his powerful foe, Maharana Sangram Singh of Mewar. A large Mogal force equipped with artillery was despatched under Khwaja Rahim and Sheikh Ghooran to drive away the Rajputs and take over charge of the famous rock fort from Tatar Khan. The arrival of an overwhelming Mogal army on the scene forced the Rajputs to raise the siege. Accompanied by a band of devoted retainers the leader Rao Ram Singh repaired to Mewar,

the hospitable kingdom of his liege lord. The magnanimous Maharana granted a daily allowance of Rs 800/- for the proper upkeep of the dignity of the exiled Tanwar prince.

Meanwhile the approach of Mogal reinforcements and the elimination of the Rajput menace to Gwalior brought about a change in the outlook of the Afghan, Tatar khan. Now that he felt secure, he repented having invited the Mogals. Accordingly he sent a very polite message to Rahim and Ghooran requesting them to convey his best thanks to Babar. But he declined to hand over the fort on the plea that he would repay the debt of gratitude by rendering military service to Babar in time of need. This was no more than pure breach of faith. The Mogal commanders who had conjured up pleasing expectations on their way to Gwalior of being feasted and lavishly entertained by the grateful Afghan chief were rudely disillusioned. Torrential rains were falling outside from which there was no adequate shelter. They were absolutely unprepared for the contingency which caught them in a most discomforting and unenviable predicament. Luckily for them a holy *fakir* named Sheikh Mahomed Ghaus, who

lived inside the fort of Gwalior, took compassion on them. One of his trusty disciples carried the details of a stratagem to Rahim, with which the Afghan was completely outwitted. Rahim and Ghooran begged permission from Tatar Khan to pass the night inside the fort, with a handful of their followers, in order to escape the inclemency of the weather outside. The Khan was prevailed upon by the *fakir* to grant this apparently innocent and trifling request. On this particular night it was so arranged that the sentries at the gate should be the devoted disciples of Mahomed Ghaus. Just before midnight large bands of Mogals were stealthily admitted into the fort. The simple minded Khan suddenly woke up in bed to find that his chamber was full of armed men and the fort was in the possession of the Mogals. Resistance was hopeless. So, like a true Afghan, he appreciated the humour of the situation and gave in with a good grace. Next morning he proceeded in the best of spirits to Babar's court who gave him an honourable rank in the Mogal army.

Sheikh Mahomed Ghaus of Gwalior is one of the most renowned Mahomedan saints

of India. He had placed Babar under a deep debt of gratitude by facilitating the capture of the fort. The emperor Humayun reposed great faith in the spiritual powers of this saint and his elder brother, Sheikh Phool. While Humayun was away in Bengal, Mirza Hindal seized Agra and proclaimed himself emperor. At this juncture Sheikh Phool was specially despatched from Gwalior by Humayun to try to dissuade the Mirza from his rebellious activities. But the aged Sheikh went forth to his doom. Mirza Hindal feared that the holy man had been deputed to kill him by manipulating the planetary influences and therefore ordered him to be ruthlessly executed in Charbagh at Agra.

The Mogal fortunes were at a dangerously low ebb in 1540, when Humayun had to flee from his vigorous Afghan adversary Sher Shah Sur. On the approach of Sher Shah towards Gwalior, Sheikh Mahomed Ghaus fled to Ahmedabad with all his followers and disciples. He returned to Gwalior after the accession of Akbar and lived to the green old age of 80 years. He died in Agra but

his body was reverently brought by his disciples and buried in Gwalior.

The fort was captured by the forces of Sher Shah in 1542. His successors made Gwalior their capital after this date. Salim Shah the able and accomplished son of Sher Shah died young in 1544 at Gwalior. With him perished the hopes of the Sur dynasty. His son Firoz aged 12 years, was raised to the throne. But the unfortunate young prince was murdered by his uncle Mubariz on the third day after his accession. The murderer ascended the throne under the title of Adil Shah Sur. Being addicted to profligate and frivolous pursuits, however, he was ill fitted to rule successfully or for long. The state treasures were squandered on dancing girls and musicians of repute, who were invited to Gwalior from far and near. By these bacchanalian activities Adil degraded himself in the estimation of the warlike Afghan nobles who were already disgusted at the murder of the innocent Firoz and looked upon Adil as a usurper. He lost all prestige among his courtiers as well as among the populace. There was a fearful scene one day in the

Darbar Hall of the fort of Gwalior. Rival Afghan factions suddenly fell out and freely indulged in an orgie of bloodshed. Several chiefs were slain while Adil looked on impotently, unable to control the situation.

Adil was himself gifted with great talents for music. This was the one outstanding virtue he possessed against his numerous vices. One day a famous Deccani musician came to the Darbar with a gigantic *pakhawaj* and challenged the court musicians, who comprised some of the leading lights of the day, to play upon the instrument, which could not be enveloped by the arms of a single person. The court musicians were confounded by the huge size of the instrument and hung down their heads in shame. The Deccani was exulting in his triumph when Adil, the royal musician, perceived a way to get over the difficulty. With a pillow under his head, he lay down full length on his *musnud* and laid the *pakhawaj* alongside him. To the wonder of the onlookers then Adil passed his right hand under the instrument and began to play, beating time with his foot. The music produced was

splendid and the Darbar Hall rang again and again with shouts of genuine applause.

An idea of Adil's refined sense of smell can be gathered from the fact that the sweeper scraped up over two seers of the purest camphor every morning from his privy room. All this music, gaiety and refinement was however not calculated to hold together the empire carved out by the sword of Sher Shah. While Adil was making merry in the fort of Gwalior, Ibrahim declared his independence in Bengal and Behar; Sikandar followed suit in the Punjab. The break-up of Afghan power enabled Humayun to reconquer the Punjab in 1554. Adil cooped himself up in the fortress of Chunar with his dancing girls and despatched his famous general Hemu to drive out the Mogals. The battle of Panipat which followed struck the death blow at Afghan empire in India.

In 1557 The young emperor Akbar attacked Gwalior, which was then in the possession of Bibil, one of the slaves of the late Afghan king Selim Shah Sur. Finding himself no match for the Mogal army in the field, Bibil despatched his messengers to Rao Ram Singh, proposing to hand over the fort of Gwalior to



Man Singh's palace.

him in exchange for a large cash amount. Ram Singh gladly assented to this proposal and moved on the fort but was defeated by the Mogals in a desperate battle in the vicinity of Gwalior, and forced to take refuge again in the territories of Mewar. Bibil had now no alternative but to surrender the fort of Gwalior to Akbar's victorious army. Thenceforth it remained an integral part of the Mogal empire for a period of a century and a half under the Great Mogals.

Rao Ram Singh and his gallant son Khande Rao nobly paid the debt of the Maharana's royal hospitality. They fought in defence of Mewar on many a bloody battlefield. Within the walls of beleaguered Chittor, they were nobly battling against the Mogals, prior to the last great Saka. But they managed to give the slip to Akbar's cordons just before the fall of Chittor, only to make the glorious sacrifice of their lives in the battle of Huldighat. Thus was the long line of the Tanwar chiefs of Gwalior finally extinguished.

PART II

STATE PRISONERS

Gwalior was no more a bone of contention between the Rajput and the Afghan. The far sighted statesmanship of Akbar completely succeeded in conciliating the Hindus. The active support and cooperation of the warlike Rajputs materially contributed to the consolidation and expansion of his empire. As a matter of fact the Rajputs began to identify their interests with the integrity of the Mogal empire. The link of friendship thus forged by the toleration and impartial magnanimity of Akbar closely united the Hindu and Moslem for over a hundred years, until it broke down under the frantic iconoclasm of his great grandson, whose misguided religious zeal sowed the seeds of a gigantic ruin.

As soon as Akbar came to the throne he decided to use the ancient fort of Gwalior as a state prison, and as such it continued to be used until its conquest by the Maratha arms. The rooms assigned to the political prisoners, called the Nauchauki, are situated close to the Dhonda Gate on the western spur of the fort.

* * * *

The very first prisoner of note to be lodged in the fort was one of the closest kinsmen of the emperor, named Khwaja Moazzam. He was a man of a very violent temper and used to grossly maltreat his wife, a princess of the blood royal. On being apprised of these disgraceful proceedings, Akbar one day expostulated with the Khwaja. However the latter poured out a torrent of invective in return and was about to use violence when he was seized in the nick of time by the palace guards. He was advised to beg forgiveness but this suggestion elicited further foul abuse. Utterly disgusted, the emperor then sent him off in 1566 as a prisoner to the fort of Gwalior, where he died a raving lunatic shortly afterwards.

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By the death of Burhan Nizam Shah, the Ahmednagar kingdom of the Deccan was plunged in serious disorders. The invading Mogal armies under prince Danyal and the Khan Khanan were not slow to avail themselves of this unlooked-for advantage. Demoralisation was setting in among the Deccanis until Chand Sultana, aunt of the boy king, came over to defend the capital. She put up a magnificent fight which inspired her followers with fresh hope. The Mogals were sorely disappointed by the stiffened resistance of the defenders which seemed to blast all their hopes of investing the citadel at an early date. It was then decided to compass by treachery what they knew could not be accomplished in fair fight. The Sultana was murdered by traitors who had been heavily bribed by the Mogals. Ahmednagar was then stormed and taken by Akbar's armies. The boy king, Bahadur Nizam Shah, his mother and other ladies of the royal seraglio were taken prisoners. The whole batch was sent off in 1600 A. D. to be confined in the fort of Gwalior, along with all the rich spoils of the Ahmednagar treasury and palaces.

They were kindly treated under Akbar's orders but were never set at liberty. The whole family clung together in their great adversity. One by one they quietly slipped out into eternity and the tragic drama was over.

* * * *

The warlike Bundelas were ever and anon breaking out into rebellion and defying the Mogal authority. In the closing years of Akbar's reign, Raja Virsingh Deo of Orchha took to a life of freebooting, popularly known as Bhoomewat among the Rajputs. Prince Salim, who bore a deadly grudge against Abul Fazl, secretly invoked the assistance of the Bundela outlaw to assassinate his foe, promising to bestow rich rewards and the rank of Panj Hazari on the accomplishment of the design. The unsuspecting Sheikh was returning from the Deccan with about three hundred retainers when this small party was ambushed by a superior Bundela force in the jungle at a distance of about fifteen miles from Gwalior. Abul Fazl's head was cut off and despatched as a present to prince Salim at Allahabad, while the trunk was interred in a modest tomb at the village of Antree, near

which the ambushade had been laid. It is needless to say that the prince generously made good all his promises on ascending the throne as Jehangir. Raja Virsingh Deo was restored to his patrimony of Orchha and was treated as a trusted friend by the emperor ever after.

In 1607, the Raja's nephew rebelled but his rising was soon put down. The young offender was caught by the Raja and lodged under the emperor's orders as a prisoner in the fort of Gwalior.

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The royal author of Tuzak-i-Jehangiri mentions that on ascending the throne of Delhi, he decreed a general pardon for criminals throughout the Mogal empire, "so that from the fort of Gwalior alone there were set at liberty not less than seven thousand individuals, some of whom had been in confinement for forty years". Out of these several hundreds were prisoners of minor note who had been convicted of political offences from time to time. The narrative indicates the enormous extent to which the fort was utilised by the Mogal emperors as a state prison. It was practically the Bastille of Mogal India, and

death or royal pardon alone could liberate a person who was once incarcerated within its walls.

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Soon after the accession of Jehangir, some Kutchwaha chiefs who had rebelled were executed in the latter part of 1606. One of them named Elcha Ram was kept as a prisoner for political reasons. The Amir-ul-Umara advised the emperor to confine him in the fort of Gwalior, since he had openly expressed his determination to go over to Maharana Amar Singh of Mewar. Jehangir thought otherwise and decided to confine the prisoner in Bengal, viz, as far away from Rajput influences as possible. As the imperial troops in charge of the prisoner had passed out of Agra fort, the Rajput retainers of Elcha Ram made a determined effort to rescue him. A terrible conflict took place under the very eyes of the emperor who watched it from the palace above. Qutb Khan and Dilawar Khan, two of the bravest of the Mogal Amirs, were slain in the vain endeavour to check the attackers. At last the prisoner was rescued. But the emperor had rushed up ten thousand Mogal horsemen, under

Sheikh Farid, all heavily armed in chain mail, to frustrate the design of the insurgents. The tide of battle soon turned. In fact the Rajputs began to scatter after their objective had been gained. The leader of the bloody adventure, Bukhta Ram, however fell into the hands of the Mogals and was despatched as a life prisoner to the fort of Gwalior.

* * * *

Khusru, the eldest son of Jehangir, had been a great favourite of Akbar and was almost nominated successor to the throne. This gave rise to considerable jealousy between the young man and his father. Labouring under a sense of bitter wrong, Khusru broke out into rebellion in the year 1606. But he was soon captured by Mahabat Khan and brought as a prisoner before the emperor. Hundreds of his followers were cruelly tortured to death while Khusru was made to behold their dying agonies. The luckless prince was then shut up along with his wives and children as a prisoner in the dungeons of the fort of Gwalior.

After a few years he was offered an opportunity of freedom and the promise of

succession on condition that he would marry the daughter of the ambitious Nur Jahan. The princess had been married to the worthless prince Shahryar and could be divorced. The gallant Khusru would not forsake his wife, to whom he was intensely devoted and refused this tantalising offer. The empress was not however the type of woman to be easily deterred in her plans. She steadily endeavoured to overcome the scruples of the royal captive, whom she wanted to make the husband of her only daughter by Sher Afgan. Special messengers were repeatedly sent to the fort of Gwalior to persuade Khusru, who, at long last, began to listen to the empress' proposal at the earnest entreaties of his own wife. As soon as Nur Jahan's brother Asaf Khan got wind of these secret negotiations, he became seriously alarmed. He desired the succession to devolve on the emperor's third son Khurram, to whom his own daughter was married. Accordingly Asaf Khan and his son-in-law began to bear a deadly grudge against the unhappy Khusru. The guards in the fort of Gwalior were quietly replaced by Asaf's intrigue by his own creatures and a systematic campaign

was started to poison Khusru. But these murderous attempts were thwarted by the sleepless vigilance of the prince's wife. Meanwhile Khurram was getting impatient at these repeated delays and resolved to hasten the end. The captain of the prison guard received a peremptory order from his master one morning and strangled the hapless Khusru.

According to a less authentic account Khusru was taken out of Gwalior in 1612 at the request of Khurram, who professed great solicitude for his woes. Then they both left for the Deccan to participate in the war against Ahmednagar. One day Khusru was found murdered and lay weltering in his blood on the floor of his tent.

The empress Nur Jahan was furious when she got this news and, as if to atone for the past, immediately took the family of the murdered prince into royal favour.

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On the celebration of Nauroz in 1610, Jehangir bestowed costly robes of honour on his courtiers and ordered the liberation of numerous prisoners from the fort of Gwalior. Of these Haji Meerak was the most notable.

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Mewar enjoyed a spell of peace for eight years after the premature decease of her immortal hero Maharana Pratap Singh. Mogal prestige was however at a sad discount owing to the successful defiance of that small kingdom. Oppressed with this idea, Jehangir despatched an overwhelming army to reduce the devoted Seesodiyas immediately after his accession to the throne. The unequal war dragged on with varying fortunes until the close of the year 1613 when Mewar, with its limited and exhausted resources, could hold out no longer. At this crucial stage of the campaign, prince Khurram who was conducting operations in the theatre of war, reported that Khan Azam, whose daughter was married to the unfortunate Khusru, was carrying on insidious intrigues calculated to help the hard pressed Maharana Amar Singh. These accusations found a ready echo in the heart of Jehangir, who had been always suspicious since Khusru's rebellion. Accordingly Mahabat Khan was deputed to bring Khan Azam and his son Abdulla to court. On their arrival both father and son were ordered to be confined in the fort of Gwalior. Captivity was however made as light and

cheerful for them as possible within the walls of the great fort. Palatial apartments were placed at their disposal and their board was daily furnished with all sorts of delicacies.

For two years Khan Azam was thus closely confined until in 1615 he was summoned to Agra. The emperor was visibly affected on meeting the grand old Khan and bestowed his own rich shawl on the latter as a mark of forgiveness and favour.

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A courtier named Sabit Khan was always inclined to behave rudely towards Asaf Khan, the brother of the empress. Jehangir had to often scold the delinquent for his sharp tongue. In 1614, Sabit Khan so exceeded the bounds of decency one day that the emperor forthwith ordered him to be lodged as a prisoner in the fort of Gwalior.

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The warrior saint Guru Har Govind, the 6th Guru of the Sikhs, was the most famous prisoner to be lodged in the fort of Gwalior during Jehangir's reign. The Guru was highly esteemed by the emperor and even used to be invited by the ladies of the Seraglio for consultation. Jehangir took him to

Kashmir for the sake of his holy company. However being used to the ceaseless flattery of the court hirelings, Jehangir could ill brook the scathing criticism offered by his fearless companion on drinking and kindred subjects. Before long he got offended in the course of the journey and sent off the Guru to be confined in the fort of Gwalior.

It became thereby a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of the devoted Khalsa who journeyed on foot from all over the Punjab impelled by their religious fervour. Since it was not possible for them to behold their revered Guru, they were content to rub their foreheads against the outer walls of the fort for beatification before they returned to their homes. The emperor happened to fall ill soon after. The court astrologer was consulted. He affirmed that the disease was the direct consequence of depriving such a saint as Guru Har Govind of his freedom. Jehangir was at first disposed to reject this explanation as an idle fear, hoping to be cured by his regular physicians. But since he grew no better and the malady developed, he agreed to issue a *firman* to set free the holy prisoner. The persuasion of the famous saint Mian Mir

greatly helped the emperor to arrive at this decision. The Guru declined to accept this offer unless his fellow captives, some Rajput and Deccan chiefs, who had become greatly attached to him, were given their liberties simultaneously. Jehangir was in such a scared mood owing to his continued sufferings that he acceded to the proposal with the utmost alacrity. The legend says that he agreed to release as many prisoners as could catch the Guru's skirt. Accordingly the Guru made a cloak with more than 50 strings (*kalis*) fixed to it, so that the 50 odd prisoners could catch hold of the strings and owed their salvation to the benign auspices of the Guru, who was thereafter known as *Bandi Chhor* or the Liberator of Prisoners. *Guru Har Govind was thus released from his dreary captivity after 12 long years. There is still a platform in existence inside the fort, which is named the platform of Pir

*Note—In 1921, the late Maharaja Madho Rao Scindia persuaded by the efforts of the Sikh Community in Gwalior, headed by Rai Bahadur Sardar Kahan Chand of the Punjab Civil Service who was then one of his trusted officers, sanctioned the construction of a Gurdwara in the public park in memory of this great Guru, with a grant of Rs. 250/- p. m. for the upkeep and Puja of this sacred shrine.

Bandi Chhor, over which a Mahomedan *fagir* lights the lamp in memory of the departed Guru.

Prince Khurram came to the throne by rebelling against his father Jehangir, who favoured the succession of his grandson Bulaqi. On ascending the throne as Shah Jehan, he seized all the Amirs and notables who had either opposed him or were suspected of having done so and shut them all up in the dungeons of Gwalior. For several years these unhappy prisoners passed a miserable existence in harsh captivity. However as soon as the political turmoils had quieted down and Shah Jehan felt his position secure, he granted a general amnesty to all the prisoners in Gwalior. His clemency went so far as to restore them to their former estates and honours. This statesmanlike action secured their allegiance to the throne once more in an unimpaired degree.

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In the latter part of Shah Jehan's reign, Thakur Jujhar Singh a Bundela chief, shook off the Mogal yoke. However the rising was premature and was not supported. His slender resources were no match for the might of the

Mogal empire in its apogee. After a hopeless fight against odds he was forced to flee and was killed in the pursuit which followed. His infant son Kunwar Prithwi Singh was captured by the Mogals and lodged in the fort of Gwalior.



The fratricidal war of succession in 1658 had ended in the complete triumph of Aurangzeb whose superior cunning had proved more than a match for any of his elder brothers. A deeply romantic interest is attached to their melancholy ends and to their children's fortunes.

The handsome Dara Shikoh was seated in tattered clothes on a sorry elephant and ignominiously paraded through the streets of Delhi before his head was cut off and presented in a platter to Aurangzeb. Murad was disposed off in a different manner. He was invited to a feast by Aurangzeb to celebrate their joint successes and there made to drink heavily. The latter then burst upon the scene and professed horror at Murad's drunkenness. A meeting of certain Ulema was convened who unanimously declared the prince to be unfit to rule. Aurangzeb then read him a

stern homily on the sin of drunkenness and on the 27th June 1660, ordered him to be lodged within the safe walls of the fort of Gwalior. Sepehr Shikoh and Jahan Zeb, Dara's children, and a son of Murad were soon after made to follow in Murad's wake. Sulaiman Shikoh, the elder brother of Sepehr, was also caught by Aurangzeb. He got an inkling of the fate in store for him. The agony of death by drinking *post* in the dungeons of Gwalior appalled his young soul. He earnestly entreated the emperor to order his execution in Delhi instead of having him murdered in Gwalior. Aurangzeb smilingly assured him that his forebodings were ill grounded. Eventually Sulaiman Shikoh was despatched to Gwalior the common destination on the 30th January 1661.

The circumstances which led up to the imprisonment of prince Sultan Mahomed, the eldest son of Aurangzeb, are altogether peculiar. The prince was deputed to seize the fort of Agra. This he successfully carried out and secured Shah Jehan as a prisoner. The princess Jahanara gladly chose to share the captivity of her aged father. All the artifices and stratagems of Shah Jehan and Jahanara

to get out of the fort of Agra were skilfully frustrated by Sultan Mahomed. Aurangzeb was led to suspect that the prince had become unduly conceited of this achievement. The sparks of estrangement, which thus originated, were fanned into bitter wrath by the subsequent rash conduct of the impetuous young prince. After the battle of Kujwa, he commanded the vanguard of Aurangzeb's armies pursuing Shujah in the latter's flight towards Bengal. At one time the relentless pursuers had well nigh overtaken the weary fugitives when Sultan Mahomed received an extremely touching epistle from his fair cousin, Ayesha, daughter of Shujah. Mahomed and Ayesha had loved each other from their childhood's days but their nuptials could not be brought about owing to the rivalry of their parents. The young lover could not, at this fateful juncture, resist the pathetic appeal for compassion in his sweetheart's letter, in which she had eloquently described her parents' woes and sufferings. Accordingly the prince went over to his uncle with some of the troops. All was rejoicing in Shujah's camp and the nuptials of the young couple were celebrated with great joy.

But there was little time for respite. Aurangzeb's main army under Mir Jumla was coming up in hot pursuit. The emperor having been mortally offended by the news of his son's desertion, so contrived that a letter artfully written by him should fall into the hands of Shujah. The result of the trick came right up to the emperor's expectations. Shujah began to suspect the young prince of harbouring treacherous designs and in spite of his grieved protestations forced him to go back and make his peace with his father. Scenes of heart breaking farewell took place in Shujah's camp: the hopes and joys of two young innocent souls were being blighted for ever. Prince Mahomed, who knew the merciless character of his father, realised that he was going back to his doom. And so it proved. Aurangzeb severely upbraided him and sent him off to be confined in the fort of Gwalior.

Out of the royal prisoners at Gwalior, poor Murad was the first to be hurried out of this earthly existence. He was accused of an attempt to escape from the fort. Whether it was a fact or not, Aurangzeb was uneasy so long as he lived. News of the attempted escape alarmed him more than ever. He

thought that so long as Murad lived the political menace to his throne would never abate. Accordingly the captive was charged with the murder of a *syed* of Ahmedabad during his viceroyalty of Gujerat. And after the mockery of a trial, Murad was executed in his dungeon at Gwalior. Sulaiman Shekoh suffered a less violent although lingering and more dreadful death. He was made to drink a cup of *post* which made him insensible. The young man was then slowly starved to death. A beautiful tomb was erected over the remains of Murad in the grand mosque of Mahomed Khan; Sulaiman was also laid to rest alongside his uncle's tomb.

Shujah and his family, including the beautiful Ayesha, had all perished in the distant hills of Arakan. Prince Mahomed became mentally deranged by his long and cruel confinement in the fort of Gwalior. He was taken out of his dismal prison in the year 1672, and confined in the fort Salimgarh at Delhi. The luckless young man dragged out a miserable existence for another six years, expired in 1678 and was buried near the famous shrine of Nizamuddin in Delhi.

Meanwhile, for various political reasons, Aurangzeb wanted to marry his son Mahomed

Azeem to Jahan zeb, Dara's daughter, who was a captive in Gwalior. But the match was bitterly opposed by Shah Jehan and Jahanara. The little princess Jahan Zeb could not herself brook the idea of marrying the son of her father's murderer. She vehemently protested against the seemingly shocking proposal. However the death of Shah Jehan in 1666 removed the principal obstacle to this union. Jahanara became reconciled to her brother and obtained his permission to adopt the princess Jahan Zeb. The latter was then brought out of the fort of Gwalior and placed under the charge of Jahanara. During the course of another three years Jahan Zeb's scruples wore down by constant persuasion until her nuptials with prince Mahomed Azeem were celebrated with great pomp in the year 1670.

Sepehr Shekoh had grown up to be a handsome prince within the great walls of Gwalior. He had been a prisoner for a period of over 15 years. The scars of old feuds had been healed by time. The empire had grown strong and stable. Aurangzeb could therefore afford to be lenient. Some of the courtiers too interceded for the deliverance of the young

prince. Accordingly the emperor gladly called Sepehr and his fellow captive, Yazeed Bakhsh, the son of Murad, to court and was pleased with the two princes. The sequel of this auspicious meeting was that Sepehr and Yazeed were respectively married to Zeb-un-nissa and Mehr-un-nissa, daughters of the emperor in the year 1675.

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In 1670, Prince Moazzam acting on the secret instructions of Aurangzeb, raised the sham standard of rebellion in the Deccan. The emperor wanted to serve a dual purpose by this stratagem. He not only wanted his foes to openly declare their hostility by joining the standard of the sham rebel but that nobody should dare to trust Moazzam again after the real facts had transpired. It would also preclude the possibility of any successful rebellion in future by any of the other royal princes. Needless to say that the cunning design proved entirely successful. Scores of Mogal grandees and military officers, whose complicity was established, were caught and shut up in the dungeons of the fort of Gwalior, to rot until rescued by death, the great liberator.

PART III

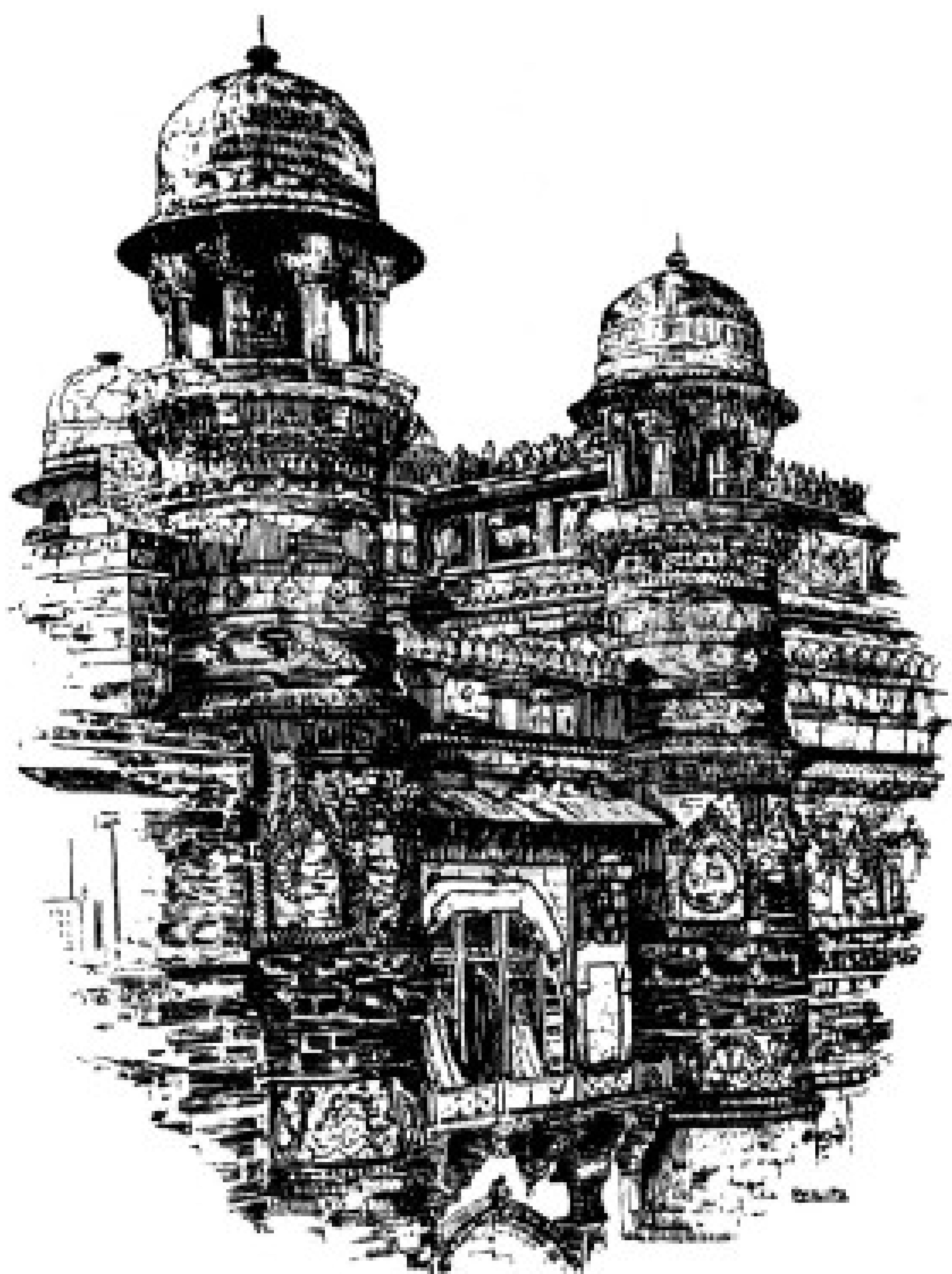
UNDER THE MARATHA FLAG

MARATHA CONQUEST

The reactionary policy of Aurangzeb had aroused political forces which rapidly gained momentum after his death and proved to be irresistible in smashing the Mogal empire before long. The Rajputs were disgusted with the cowardly attack in Delhi on the queen of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Marwar; their sullen hatred burst into flame by the emperor's abortive attempt to forcibly convert the Rathores to Islam and his unprovoked attack on Mewar. The Rajputs never forgot these outrages. Up in the North, the Sikhs, being goaded by religious persecution, were organizing themselves into a powerful military confederacy. The weakening of the political bonds of the empire enabled the Jats to hack out of the very heart of the

Mogal empire a compact principality under their intrepid chief Suraj Mal. But the most imminent danger to the empire of the Mogals arose from the Deccan. The temporary discomfiture which resulted from the premature death of Sivaji was retrieved before long by an illustrious band of Maratha patriots, whose dogged and indomitable resistance hurled back the tide of Mogal invasion during the closing years of Aurangzeb's life.

To the remarkable sagacity and statesmanship of Balaji Wishwanath signs were not wanting to indicate that the vitality of the Mogal empire had sunk so low that the process of its dissolution could be hastened by launching on a bold aggressive policy. His brilliant son Bajee Rao, justly reckoned as the greatest soldier-statesman of the age, invaded the Mogal dominions in person in November 1731. Gwalior was submerged by the rising tide of Maratha invasion and the Maratha standards were planted on the banks of the Jumna for the first time. Right up to the very walls of Delhi, the Marathas penetrated but they had to return to the Deccan soon after.



The Watchtowers Gwalior Fort.

Ranojee Scindia was now entrusted by the Poona Cabinet to hold the northern outposts of the Maratha empire. This important charge was nobly executed by the house of Scindia. Ranojee securely established himself in Malwa and steadily began to expand the Maratha dominions Northwards. The strong fort of Gwalior naturally became the headquarters of the Maratha armies operating in Hindustan.

On the death of Ranojee his two sons Jayapa and Madhojee took up the Northern command and pursued an even more vigorous policy than their father. Jayapa was assassinated at Jodhpur in 1759. However Madhojee was destined to gain the greatest renown and political power in the land. The Marathas and Jats made common cause and drove a mortal wedge into the heart of the empire of Delhi. In short a powerful Hindu revival had taken place which had resulted in the total subversion of Mahomedan power in Hindustan. Events thus moved fast towards the third battle of Panipat until it was precipitated by Raghoba's premature invasion of the Punjab. This drew the Abdali from Afghanistan to contest the political supremacy of Northern India with the enterpri-

sing Marathas. Suraj Mal, the famous Jat chief of Bharatpur, now a war-worn veteran, strongly advised Rao Bhao, the commander in chief, to establish his headquarters at Gwalior. The great forts of Gwalior and Bharatpur could serve as splendid bases in the rear while military reconnaissances and a cautious war could be carried on in the North. Suraj Mal and Holkar were unanimously of the opinion that the best plan would be to break down the enemy by guerilla warfare, viz. the national system of war which could be launched with the utmost confidence of final success. But Bhao had witnessed the devastating effect of up-to-date artillery and the effectiveness of European discipline in war. He therefore resolved to stake the issue on the result of a pitched battle rather than embark on guerilla war. With greater prudence, the Afghan general adopted the latter tactics and succeeded in cutting off the food supplies of the Maratha army.

Suraj Mal was disgusted and left the field at the head of his powerful Jat auxiliary force. So did Holkar, without participating in the conflict. They foresaw the inevitable disaster

which soon overtook the Maratha army. The gallant young Madhojee Scindia, wounded and weary, managed to escape from the battlefield under the protecting wings of night. Almost all of the Maratha possessions lying north of the Nerbudda were temporarily lost. The fort of Gwalior was seized by the uncle of Lokinder Singh, the first Jat chief of Dholpur. After a few years' respite the dauntless Marathas invaded Hindustan again in 1765 under the joint command of Scindia and Holkar, penetrating the heart of Rohilkhand, which was given up to the fire and sword. This invasion led to the reconquest of practically the whole country which had been abandoned after the last battle of Panipat, except the Jat state of Bharatpur, whose chief had come to an amicable understanding with the Marathas. Gwalior was permanently occupied and became the military headquarters of Scindia. Its subsequent history is closely interwoven with the fortunes of the Scindia dynasty.

THE HOUSE OF SCINDIA

The brilliant genius of Madhojee began again to assert itself. He cleverly manipula-

ed all the cross currents of intrigue at the Mogal capital to advance the Maratha interests. Active intervention in the affairs of the Mogal court secured to him political advantages at every step. His armies drilled by De Boigne and other French military adventurers, became the terror of the neighbouring states. In short, Madhojee's rapid rise to supreme political power in Hindustan seriously alarmed Warren Hastings, resulting in the first Maratha clash with British arms. Major Popham moved out with a British force to protect the Rana of Gohud. Thence he penetrated into Scindia's dominions and assailed Gwalior. The fort was however reputed to be impregnable and General Sir Eyre Coote characterised it as a mad attempt. For more than two months the British army tried in vain to capture the fort. All assaults were vigorously repulsed. The Maratha gunners kept up a well directed fire which precluded the possibility of taking the fort by storm. On the 3rd August 1780, Captain Bruce and a picked body of soldiers silently scaled the walls at the dead of night and after a sharp hand to hand fighting overcame the resistance of the surprised garrison. By daybreak the

British flag waved triumphantly over the ramparts of the fort of Gwalior. The escalade had been carried out under the leadership of a Dacoit who had volunteered to guide Captain Bruce up the frowning rock at the Western base of the fort, which is yet known as the Feringhi Pahar.

This successful adventure brought the first Maratha war to a sudden close. According to the terms of peace settled with Scindia, all his territories South and West of the Jumna were restored to him on the 13th October 1781, but the fort of Gwalior was made over to Rana Lokinder Singh of Gohud as a reward for his friendly cooperation with the British in the late war. The Governor General considered it of vital importance to preserve and strengthen the principality of Gohud as a buffer against the dangerous growth of Scindia's power. By the same treaty it was also stipulated that the political integrity of the state of Gohud should be respected by Scindia so long as the Rana loyally discharged his obligations to the British government. The famous treaty of Salbye was negotiated the next year. Its final ratification was evaded month after

month owing to the outstanding cleverness of the Poona statesmen, the swift military movements of Haider Ali in the Carnatic and the brilliant diplomacy of Madhojee, who derived the largest advantages. The treaty was at last signed on the 17th May 1782 to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. This event entirely changed the diplomatic outlook.

The Rana of Gohud, who was found guilty of treachery next year, was given up by the British Government to the wrath of Madhojee, with whom friendly relations had been inaugurated by the treaty of Salbye. The fort of Gwalior was therefore assailed by Scindia's troops under general De Boigne in 1783; but the attempts to take it by storm or escalade were stoutly repulsed. De Boigne had then recourse to strategem. He bought over Moti Ram, an influential officer among the garrison who secretly admitted the besiegers into the fort. As soon as the brave Rani of Gohud, who was within the fort, learnt of this treachery, she ordered her faithful servants to set fire to her apartments. The leaping flames and crackling debris soon told Scindia's army how the noble lady and her maids had perished in order to escape the

ignominy of capture. Gohud was simultaneously reduced. Soon after Rana Chhuter Singh was himself captured at Karoba and lodged as a state prisoner in the fort of Gwalior, where he died in 1785.

Madhojee Scindia passed away in 1794 bequeathing the splendid legacy of his extensive dominions in Central India and Hindustan to his nephew Daulat Rao Scindia. The armies of Scindia disciplined and officered by a number of foreign military adventurers and aided by a large park of field artillery, held the whole of Rajputana at their mercy. While Scindia was away in the Deccan in an endeavour to solve the political conundrums of the Poona Cabinet to his own advantage, his viceroy in Hindustan, Ambajee Inglia, was reaping a rich harvest by the spoils of Mewar. Vast riches amassed by Ambajee secured to him the sinews of political power which he so dearly coveted. Daulat Rao Scindia appointed him governor of Gwalior and Gohud shortly after his accession. The outbreak of the Second Maratha War in 1802 furnished the opportunity to Ambajee of realizing his life's dream of founding an independent dynasty of his own. He threw

off his allegiance to Scindia and went over to the British, surrendering the forts of Gwalior and Gohud to the latter along with several fertile districts of Daulat Rao Scindia's territories, on condition of being recognised as independent ruler of his other possessions. The districts ceded by the traitor Ambajee were awarded by the British government to Rana Keerut Singh of Gohud in January 1804, while the city and fort of Gwalior were acquired by the British under the treaty of Sirje Anjangaon.

Daulat Rao Scindia was deeply galled by the deprivation of Gwalior, his famous citadel. Before a couple of years had elapsed the Governor General was constrained to admit that the basis of a lasting peace in Hindustan could not be secured until Gwalior and Gohud were delivered to their rightful master. In November 1805, Lord Cornwallis therefore partially modified the treaty of Sirje Anjangaon to the effect that Gwalior and Gohud were restored to Scindia. And the irony of fate is, that Ambajee the sorry traitor was also given up to be punished by Daulat Rao as he thought fit. A condign punishment was meted out to the traitor. He was forced to disgorge his

vast hoards of wealth and died in utter penury two years later.

A treaty of mutual friendship was signed at Gwalior in 1817 between the British government and Scindia by which the latter agreed to help the former in suppressing the Pindaree pest. In 1827, Daulat Rao Scindia passed away without leaving any male heir. The capable dowager Maharani Baija Bai Ghatge now adopted a boy Jankojee Rao from the family and carried on the administration as Regent. Jankojee Rao Scindia turned out to be a weak ruler and throughout his uneventful reign the court of Gwalior was a hotbed of intrigue and party strife. He died in 1843 and was succeeded by Alijah Jayajee Rao Scindia, then only 8 years of age. The intrigues of the last reign began to bear their evil fruit. Each of the two rival parties at court wanted to have its own nominee as Regent during the period of minority of the young Maharaja. The majority of the nobles chose the maternal uncle of the late ruler, called Mama Sahib, a statesman of broad political outlook who fully appreciated the value of maintaining friendly relations with the British government. However the reactionary party

headed by Dada Khasjeewallah exercised greater influence over the palace. And since the army was won over to the side of Dada, he easily prevailed upon the Maharani to banish Mama Sahib from the realm, inspite of the strong remonstrances of the British Resident. Then followed a series of political appointments and dismissals, all calculated to exasperate and defy the Resident. The army was augmented and massed for invading the Tonk State, where Mama Sahib was living in exile. The British government could not at last afford to look on with indifference at these dangerous proceedings. The existence of a hostile government with an overgrown and powerful army at Gwalior could not be tolerated on the eve of war with the formidable Khalsa armies across the Sutlej. Accordingly the Resident was withdrawn from Gwalior and Lord Ellenborough plainly intimated that in order to restore friendly relations, it was essential for the Gwalior Darbar to banish Dada Khasjeewallah and to considerably reduce the army. Although the Gwalior cabinet and the Maharani were disposed to come to amicable terms, yet their intentions were thwarted by the army which was

ungovernable. It quickly brought on the inevitable conflict with the British government which was as quickly finished by the battles of Maharajpur and Panniar. By the terms of the treaty which was signed at Gwalior on 13th January 1844, it was stipulated that the fort of Gwalior should be held by British troops on behalf of the minor Maharaja Jayajee Rao Scindia. On his coming to age in 1858, the fort was surrendered to him by Lord Dalhousie after a temporary occupation of 9 years by British troops.

THE GREAT MUTINY

The final episode in the blood-splashed history of the fort of Gwalior was ushered in by the Great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The sparks of that terrible conflagration could not fail to reach Gwalior after the storm centre had shifted southwards from Delhi. Rebel agents were at work almost all over India including the Native States. Their machinations however failed to shake the steadfast loyalty of the two great Maratha houses of Central India, viz, of Scindia and Holkar. Writing in 1878, David Wedderburn says that a word spoken by Scindia and

Holkar would have sufficed to produce a general rising in Central India and the Maratha countries, making the Mutiny ten times more formidable. "The temptation to speak that word was strong but it was not spoken", which speaks volumes for their loyalty to the British crown. The subsidiary force stationed at Morar Cantonement, popularly known as the Gwalior Contingent, was however not proof against rebel temptations. In fact it was composed of the very same class of soldiers, the high caste martial Hindus of Rajputana and Oudh—'men possessing stalwart athletic frames and high courage'—who formed the bulk of the Company's armies. As such they were easily persuaded to identify their interests with the rebels. The Gwalior Contingent broke out into mutiny in October 1857 and marched on Cawnpore. General Windham, who bravely struck in with a considerably inferior force to check their advance, was badly defeated, and lost the whole of his military equipage. Cawnpore was seized by the rebels. They were in turn expelled by the gallant Sir Colin Campbell. Soon after the mutineers' entrenched stronghold at Kalpee was captured by the English

generals after fierce hand to hand fighting, which forced the notorious Rao Sahib to fly along the banks of the Jumna until he reached Gopalpura in Jalaun district. Here he was joined by Tantia Topi, the Rani of Jhansi, the Nawab of Banda and other rebel commanders. A solemn council of war was now held to deliberate on the future plan of operations.

The situation was getting desperate as they had been beaten back at every step by the English generals and their organization had been largely broken up. Some wild proposals were made not one of which bore any prospect of success. But the keen military talents of the Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Topi served the mutineers in good stead at this crisis. They clearly perceived the hopelessness of opposing the English armies in the open field and suggested that if the famous rock fort of Gwalior could be taken, the coup would not only enhance their military reputation but the fort would serve as a great rallying centre, which was sorely needed. This counsel was acclaimed all round and was forthwith acted upon. The fact that Tantia Topi had already visited Gwalior in secret invested his opinion with particular

weight. He entertained hopes of organizing a popular rising in Central India if a strong base were established at Gwalior.

By forced marches, accordingly, the mutineers struck out for Gwalior. Scindia, being apprised of the approaching storm, wisely sent over the English people-men, women and children who were under his protection to Agra under a powerful escort in order to ensure their safety. He now barely found time to shut himself up in the fort of Gwalior before it was enveloped by the fierce breakers of the mutiny. A clear message was transmitted by Tantia Topi to the citadel that Scindia could purchase his safety by forsaking his loyalty to the British. The situation was fraught with perils. Scindia's able minister Dinkar Rao advised him to gain time by pretending to enter into pourparlers with the mutineers in the hope that some of the British troops might turn up from Agra. However Dinkar Rao had reckoned without the subtlety of the foe. Tantia Topi was too wary a general to be caught in such a trap. He precipitated the crisis and forced Scindia to choose. There was then no alternative for Scindia but to attack the mutineers

with the handful of his household troops. But his force was vigorously assailed by the Rani of Jhansi in person at the head of her chosen band of 300 horsemen. This furious onslaught put Scindia's faltering followers to flight while numbers actually went over to the enemy. It was with the utmost difficulty that Scindia and Dinkar Rao managed to escape with their lives to Agra. The coast was now clear for Tantia Topi to enter the fort and plunder the royal arsenal. Half a crore of rupees was looted from the treasury and distributed among the mutineers. Nana Sahib was solemnly proclaimed as Peishwa by the mutineers' headquarters at Gwalior, where an orgie of continual festivities and wild revelry set in.

This was the fag end of the Mutiny. On receipt of this alarming intelligence, the Governor General despatched Sir Hugh Rose to stamp it out in Central India. Accordingly the latter bore down on Gwalior and posted his veterans like Major Orr, Colonel Riddel and Brigadier Smith with strong forces at the strategic positions of Panniar, Agra Road and Koteki Sarai. Gwalior was practically encircled in order to leave no chance of escape to the mutineers within. Sir Hugh Rose drove

the mutineers out of Morar by a determined attack. For three days, however, the Rani of Jhansi with her favourite maid named Mundara, both clad in male attire, bravely contended against Brigadier Smith's forces in the eastern theatre of the field of battle. Her favourite horse was shot under her to her intense grief and, as a matter of fact, the new horse which she had to choose eventually proved to be her undoing. Personal valour on the part of the Rani was of little avail against numbers and effective artillery. The mutineers were defeated in every direction. At last a small band desperately cut their way through the besiegers but the fort of Gwalior fell to the victorious arms of Sir Hugh Rose on 19th June 1858. Lieutenant Rose the gallant young subaltern who led the final storm fell mortally wounded at the Badalgarh Bastion.

Among those who had escaped was the Rani of Jhansi with a few trusty Sardars and retainers. Some native troopers of the English army started in pursuit. The Rani's horse shied and refused to jump a *nullah*. The delay thus caused proved fatal as a couple of her pursuers found time to rush up. She received a bullet in her thigh causing much pain and

loss of blood. One of the *sowars* struck her on the head with his bayonet while the other wounded her in the back. But the Rani turned on them like an enraged tigress and cut them both down with her sword. Sardar Ram Chandra Rao and the maid Mundara, who alone had remained with her, reverently carried her across the *nullah* and laid her in the cottage of Baba Ganga Das. The Rani felt her end approaching and made them swear that they would not let her mortal body fall into the hands of the enemy. She then quenched her thirst with the holy water of the Ganges and soon closed her eyes in eternal sleep. Sardar Ram Chandra Rao placed her body on a stack of hay, which lay near by the cottage, and set fire to it. Her faithful maid Mundara could bear to live no longer and immolated herself on the burning pyre of her noble mistress. The gallant English general Sir Hugh Rose said "The best man upon the side of the enemy was the woman found dead, the Rani of Jhansi".

A larger rebel party which had escaped in a different direction headed by Tantia Topi with some field guns, was pursued and completely routed by Brigadier Napier, which proved to be the finishing stroke of the Great Mutiny.

DAWN OF PEACE

Scindia reascended the throne of his ancestors amidst general rejoicings. Peace had settled down once more over the country with its attendant blessings. The British Government revised most of the treaties with the Indian states on a basis of mutual satisfaction. The Gwalior treaties were revised and embodied in a treaty of 1860. The fort of Gwalior was not mentioned in it as it was considered advisable by the British Government, in the interests of the peace and safety of Hindustan, that the fort should continue to be held by British troops for some time to come. However Lord Canning gave a definite promise to Scindia that the fort of Gwalior would be restored to him as soon as Government was satisfied that the transference would be safe. This wise undertaking was re-iterated by Lord Lawrence. Eventually in 1886, Lord Dufferin, with the full consent of Parliament, restored the great rock fort along with Morar Cantonement to Scindia in honourable fulfillment of Lord Canning's pledge. Since then it has remained in the undisturbed possession of the illustrious house of Scindia under the aegis of Great Britain.



